Hike in administered prices of essential commodities

793. SHRI O. P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been steep hike in the administered prices of cooking oils, pulses of all varieties including Kabuli chana, washing soaps, basmati tota, deshi ghee, machine made bisculits etc, during 1994 and in 1995.

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the prices of these items from 1st January, 1994 to date, monthwise and how do these compare with the prices in the preceding three years; and

(d) the steps taken to bring down the prices?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) and (b) The items ilke cooking oils, pulses of all varieties including Kabuli chana, washing soaps basmati tota, deshi ghee, machine made biscuits etc. are not covered under the purview of administered prices.

(c) A statement showing the wholesale price indices of the above items from 1st January, 1994 to 25th February, 1995 alongwith the comparative position in the preceding three years is given at Annexure. (*See* Appendix 173, Annexure No. 11).

(d) The Government has accorded the highest priority for controlling the prices of essential commodities and also to augmenting their supplies. Towards this end, efforts are being made to increase their indigenous production through various schemes. Further, to supplement their availability, the essential commodities like pulses, palmolein and vegetable oils, sugar etc. are being imported in the most desired quantity. The essential commodities like rice, wheat, sugar, imported edible oil, kerosene and soft coke are being supplied through Public Distribuion System at below market price. State Governments/UT Administrations have been requested to supply additional items like pulses, exercise books etc. through their retail outlets. A close watch is being kept on their prices their prices and availability in the market on regular basis and strict actions are being taken against the blackmarketeers, hoarders and those indulging in unfair trade practices under the Essential Commodities Act and Prevention of Black Marketing Act etc.

Committee to recommend charges in standards of weighs and easures Rules, 1977

794. PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have constituted a committee to examine, review and make suitable recommendations to bring about changes in the provisions of the Standards of Weights and Measures *(Packaged Commodities) Rules, 1977;*

(b) if so, whether the committee has started working;

(c) whether the committee has made any recommendations and if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon; and

(d) what are the other measures that Government propose to take to safeguard the interests of the consumers at large?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Yes, Sir. On the basis of the recommendations of the Committee, the Standards of Weights and Measures (Packaged Commodities) Rules 1977 have been amended three tims during 1994-95.

(d) The Committee meets periodically to consider proposals from various sections of Society for revision of the rules and make suitable recommendations. The Government after consideration of the recommendations, takes suitable steps for reviewing the rules to safeguard the interests of consumers at large.

Rising prices of Edible Oils

795. PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the prices of the edible oils have been on the rise even after import of edible oils;

(b) if so, the details of the retail prices of the edible oils prevailing in the open market, in Kendriya Bhandar and Super Bazar, brand-wise in the last twelve months.

(c) the quantity of edible oils imported in the last twelve months and what mode was adopted in the sale thereof giving the prices at which it was imported and price at which the same was sold; and

(d) what benefit did the import of edible oil accrue to the people at large of the country?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) and (b) Due to the gap of over 5 lakh tonnes in the demand and supply of edible oils in the country, some rise in the prices of edible oils has been noted even after import of edible oils. The retail prices of major edible oils like mustard oil and groundnut oil at Super Bazar, Kendriya Bhandar and in the open markets are given at Annexure. (*See* Appendix 173, Annexure No. 12).

(c) Import of 1,07,013 MT of Palmolein was made by STC for the PDS during 1994-95 at CIF value of Rs. 188.94 crores. The oil was supplied States/UTs at Central Issue Price of Rs. 24,000 MT (in bulk) and Rs. 27,000 MT (in 15 Kg. tins).

(d) The imported palmolein is supplied to the people at below market price under the Public Distribution System and it has augmented the availability of edible oils in the country.

Policy to revamp existing PDS in backward areas

796. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have formulated a policy to revamp existing PDS in backward areas; and

(b) what defects have been noticed in the existing PDS system the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. The Revamped Public Distribution System was formally launched on 1-1-1992 for improving the reach of the Public Distribution System in the desert, drought-prone, hilly and tribal areas of the country, identified in consultation with the State Governments/UT Administrations.

(b) In consultation with the State Governments, it was agreed that there was a need to improve the infrastructure for Public Distribution System by opening additional Fair Price Shops, issuing ration cards to the population not covered so far, hire/construct additional godown capacity, introduce door-step delivery of PDC commodities to the Fair Price Shops and constitute Fair Price Shop Level Vigilance Committees consisting of consumers. State Governments/UT Administrations also agreed to include additional items of mass consumption such as tea, pulses, soaps